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ABSTRACT

The Community Collaborative Professional Development Center (CCPDC) coordinates the preservice teacher-training efforts of Texas Woman's University (TWU) by linking teacher educators with school districts which provide field placements for students and community business partners. The CCPDC includes 11 school districts that provide field training sites for hundreds of TWU preservice teachers. The CCPDC has developed a collaborative project to integrate the use of the Internet into participating schools. The Classroom Internet Integration Project extends through K-12, and in all content areas, to address the needs of teachers in the Aubrey Independent School District (AISD), a rural district with limited local resources. The Ysleta Independent School District (YISD) partners with the AISD in developing and evaluating project activities. This paper discusses: (1) the Classroom Internet Integration Project partners, including school districts, TWU, and the Corporation for Public Broadcasting; (2) structure of the integration program, including tasks and teacher groups; (3) implementation, including curriculum development, design teams, and technology utilization; and (4) implications for technology in teacher education. (AEF)

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Classroom Internet Integration: A Collaborative Adventure

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Classroom Internet Integration: A Collaborative Adventure

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The Community Collaborative Professional Development Center (CCPDC) coordinates the preservice teacher-training efforts of Texas Women's University (TWU) by linking teacher educators with school districts which provide field placements for students and community business partners. The CCPDC includes eleven school districts that provide field training sites for hundreds of TWU preservice teachers including two urban districts (Dallas and Ft. Worth), three suburban districts (Denton, Keller, Lewisville), and five rural districts (Aubrey, Lake Dallas, Little Elm, Pilot Point, and Sanger). Each of these districts has unique characteristics and the CCPDC design provides preservice teachers with experiences in multiple settings during their teacher education programs.

In addition to the eleven school districts, the CCPDC includes Regional Education Service Center XI, the Texas Parent Teachers Association, Community in Schools, and the International Business Machines corporation. An Advisory Board with representatives from each of the partners establishes policies for collaborative projects. The CCPDC Director reports to the Advisory Board and to the Dean of the College of Education and Human Ecology at TWU. Eleven university professors serve as CCPDC University Liaisons to link the university with participating school districts. The CCPDC program was established in the fall of 1996 and replaces the existing TWU teacher education program in the fall of 1998. Funding was used to support district identified technology needs and technology instruction on the university campus.

Classroom Internet Integration Project Collaborative Partners

School Districts

The CCPDC has developed a collaborative project to integrate the use of the Internet into participating schools. The Classroom Internet Integration Project extends through K-12, and in all content areas, to address the needs of teachers in the Aubrey Independent School District (AISD). AISD enrolls 905 students on its three campuses. Thirty percent of the students are considered at-risk because of low SES. The teachers in this district all have computers on their desk and are quite computer literate.

This project includes an all-level effort for training and utilization of Internet in all classrooms in the district. This effort is timely and possible due (a) to the size of the Aubrey district, (b) its advanced status in technology, (c) its history of collaboration (d) its support of staff development to reach district goals, and (e) the support for technology provided by the AISD School Board. Current technology resources include a 4 to 1 ratio of computers to students, WAN facilities, Internet access in all classrooms, and links to TWU, the CCPDC, and the Corporation for Public Broadcasting (CPB).

Aubrey ISD is a rural district with limited local resources. However, they have community support for building a new high school and renovating other facilities and have state grant support for the installation of Internet in every classroom. Texas Woman's University completed the classroom connections for Internet access the fall of 1997 and provides training in educational technology through the Department of Educational Leadership and Information Technology Services.

The AISD Technology Coordinator spearheaded the technology training efforts in the AISD. An AISD Staff Developer is also a member of the Research Team and led the training and implementation efforts for the elementary levels. The Webmaster is a doctoral student in School Psychology with strong technical and research expertise.

The Ysleta Independent School District (YISD) partners with the AISD in developing and evaluating project activities. The YISD includes El Paso which is urban with a 75% minority enrollment and is located in southwest Texas. The Program Coordinator of the Magnet High School coordinates implementation and evaluation in YISD. A network of elementary, middle, and high school teachers in El Paso are being identified to serve as partners to the AISD cadre of teachers for implementation of the WWW based prototype lessons.

Ysleta ISD is in the El Paso area which is markedly different from the Aubrey area. Aubrey has little ethnic

diversity, is rural, is in North Texas, and performs at a high academic level; El Paso is on the southern border, is urban and has a high concentration of minority students. This partnership provides an opportunity to share and evaluate lessons in two diverse settings. It also makes possible Internet-based communication between students in the two districts.

Over the past five years the Aubrey ISD has collaborated with TWU in the development of a new teacher education program. These efforts have focused on improving classroom instruction. With support from Texas Woman's University, a series of staff development sessions were implemented for AISD and other rural districts. An important additional benefit of this effort is the modeling and mentoring of effective instructional uses for the Internet provided by trained teachers.

Texas Women's University

The University Professors serving on the Research Team are instructors in educational technology and serve as University Liaisons to three rural districts. They have previously implemented technology-focused research in school settings and published and disseminated findings appropriately. The AISD Technology Coordinator, serves with them as the Texas CPB Summit Team.

The project provides outreach including sharing of experiences and products within the district, with the University and through Internet with a partner program in the El Paso area, the Ysleta Independent School District, and eventually with Summit Teams of the Corporation of Public Broadcasting.

Corporation for Public Broadcasting

University professors from TWU and school technology coordinators from AISD were invited to participate in their Fourth Summit for Educators held in Dallas during September of 1997 by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting. These Summits were co-sponsored by the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE). This team was the only representative from Texas. This opportunity facilitated communication and possible collaboration with over 100 summit teams across the nation who participated in these summits. The summits focused on integrating technology into the curriculum. The partnership with Ysleta ISD grew out of the Dallas CPB Summit.

Structure of the Program

Tasks

1. TWU, AISD, and YISD design and implement the project.
2. Select, organize, and support a representative Expert Team. Define roles, responsibilities, and timeline to accomplish: (a) assessment of lesson plans, (b) selection of exemplary lessons from various levels and content areas, and (c) implementation of further utilization and evaluation within AISD and YISD.
3. Select and prepare cadres of university students to support classroom teachers during training days.
4. Establish a website to be linked to the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, Texas Woman's University, and Aubrey Independent School District.
5. Prepare teachers at all levels in AISD to integrate the use of WWW resources into their classroom instruction in ten training days.
6. Implement and evaluate lesson plans developed by each AISD teacher who was trained.
7. Implementation of prototype Internet based lessons by an established AISD and YISD teacher team to encourage further collaborative efforts of integrating Internet resources into classroom instruction. This also encourages reflections on teaching and learning and possible classroom interchanges.
8. Share the new curriculum and the collaborative process at university, district, and conference events as well as electronically with other summit teams.

Teacher Groups

Three distinct collaborative groups of teacher participants were established: (a) identification of AISD teachers to be trained, (b) the Expert Team, and (c) Partner teachers for the YISD collaboration. The first group included all K-12 teachers, who were trained to utilize Internet resources in their respective classrooms. Some needed more training and assistance than others. Some did not wait for formal training to begin exploring the possibilities.

The second group was a seven member Expert Team which represented elementary, middle, and high school levels. This team, trained by Education Service Center Region XI, taught teacher inservices, and provided classroom support for teachers, evaluated lessons submitted after the first testing, identified peer teachers to utilize and evaluated lessons, and selected Partner Team members. The Expert Team also shared products in CCPDC seminars and with University content specialists.

The third group was comprised of partnering teachers. Pairs of AISD and YISD teachers communicated electronically about their utilization and evaluation of lessons as they were used in their classrooms. The lessons become available to others through the AISD, TWU and CPB/NCATE web sites.

Implementation

Curriculum Development

The first step in teacher training was a series of voluntary after school sessions for technology novices in February 1998. These sessions provided basic experience in connectivity including use of Netscape, bookmarks, and accessing some valuable educational sites. This orientation was followed by two inservice days. One day centered on lesson development and the other on analysis of appropriate Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills competencies for

teachers' grade levels and content areas. The third training period provided opportunity for the teachers to develop lessons in their own classrooms with Expert Team members available in their building for specific help and encouragement. Each teacher was expected to develop, teach, and evaluate at least one lesson during this semester. As lessons were implemented, other teachers at their grade level or in their content area were encouraged to field-test them. The best of these lessons were identified as models for sharing with other members of the CCPDC, with TWU preservice teachers in technology seminars, and with teachers in the Ysleta Independent School District.

Teams

The Expert Team was responsible for design and implementation of training sessions. Others involved in implementation included the Research Team (university professors, AISD technology coordinator, AISD staff developer, and the WebMaster), the Partner Teams (teachers from AISD and YISD selected to share lessons and insights), technology professors from TWU, and university liaisons who share curriculum with other CCPDC districts.

The Research Team provided training seminars for CCPDC students on the integration of Internet and collaborated with other professors on enriching university classroom instruction. They also communicated with other CPB summit teams to share the process and products developed by the AISD Implementation Team. Products were posted on class web sites and the CCPDC web site.

Technology Utilization

The Aubrey District has been a leader in staff development and in technology. In May of 1997, AISD received a state grant which helped to provide the needed infrastructure and funds for staff development. Both the Aubrey Independent School District and Texas Woman's University are committed to integrating technology into the classroom. With the support of an AISD small district grant and the 1997-1998 CCPDC grant both of these entities have the necessary infrastructure to support teacher training in effective utilization of WWW resources in classroom instruction.

This massive technological change in AISD was possible because of the small size of the district, its history of staff development and performance, the level of technology available, and the quality of the leadership team. The Superintendent and Technology Coordinator spearheaded the district effort and it was enthusiastically supported by the Principals and the Staff Development Coordinator. Teachers varied in their technological confidence and interest but comprehensive training and extensive support has resulted in significant classroom innovation.

Web page links between the CCPDC university liaisons, mentor teachers, student interns, student teachers has increased communication among participating groups. Telecommunication between Research Team Members and the Expert Team Members has also facilitated project management. Changes that seemed extremely difficult have become possible and easier as the project gains momentum.

Internet access has now been installed throughout the district. All AISD teachers have been trained to develop, utilize, and evaluate a lesson plan utilizing Internet resources. Each of these teachers will have implemented at least one such lesson during this school year. During teacher training, TWU students served as substitutes in classrooms providing support for the teachers and also gaining valuable experience for themselves.

Lesson plans have been assessed by the Expert Team and the best at each level or within each content area is being implemented and evaluated by a Partner Team which includes an AISD and a counterpart teacher from YISD. Both the implementation of the lesson and reflections on its effectiveness are facilitated and enhanced by electronic correspondence between the AISD and YISD teacher team.

Implications for Technology in Teacher Education

This collaborative effort supports the professional development of (a) preservice teachers at three levels, (b) the mentor teachers in two districts, and (c) the teacher educators at the Texas Woman's University. Thus students, mentor teachers, and university personnel are enriched and sharing across the country is supported.

The TWU preservice teachers participated in field settings for two semesters as interns prior to becoming residents in a third placement. During this three semester period the campus technology seminars address connectivity, productivity, and integration. The opportunity to participate in field settings in active learning communities pursuing integration of technology is an important experience for them.

Collaboration of teachers across grade levels and content areas extended teachers' professional development within the district settings. Their active collaboration with liaisons and other professors also enhanced teacher education in the university setting. In addition this collaborative adventure provided a framework for cross-cultural exchanges between teachers in contrasting districts and provided a context for collaboration among their students. This sharing of resources was expedited by access to communication technology.

Establishing connectivity between professors, interns, residents, and teachers is the foundation for ongoing electronic communication and individual professional growth. The AISD district-wide effort enhances the professional development of classroom teachers by supporting them in developing skills necessary to utilize Internet to enhance their teaching and to share their plans and reflections with their counterparts in distant classrooms. University seminar presentations by these mentor teachers expanded the learning of preservice teachers and university

professors in the area of using Internet as a resource. The availability of these resources on the AISD, CCPDC, and TWU web sites supports dissemination and encourages reflective interaction between professional edu tors locally as well as nationally.

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